

## *Chapter 1*

Bobbi stood by and watched an airport security agent ramble through her Gucci handbag. The agent had questioned her about a six-ounce bottle of facial moisturizer, which she'd paid fifty dollars for, and then threw it away. When he cleared her to travel, she gathered her belongings—and her dignity—and headed for her boarding gate.

She checked the time and stopped at a café on the departure gate concourse for a vanilla latte. Moving forward in line, she ordered, swiped her card, and then stepped aside. At the condiments bar, she noticed a handsome man stirring his coffee before a deep male voice called out her order for pick up. She gave the stranger a small smile, taking a sip of the smooth steamy beverage to avoid further eye contact, and moved on.

At the boarding gate, Bobbi powered on her laptop to take one last look at her presentation. She clicked through the charts reviewing her notes, and rehearsed her pitch. If everything went according to plan, she would be signing her first professional athlete to the roster at My Way Communications.

Representing a major athlete would give her the exposure she wanted in the world of professional sports. This would diversify her client portfolio and set her up for long-term success. Bobbi smiled.

“United Airlines flight 1507 with service to Atlanta now boarding business class and premier members at gate five,” said the attendant, pulling Bobbi out of her dreamy state.

She put away her laptop, drank the last of her latte, and then went to stand near the blue ropes for boarding.

That's when she saw the attractive man from the café ahead of her with a tall model-type chick at his side. Bobbi couldn't deny how well he wore his jeans and the way his muscles rippled underneath the white polo shirt. Hmmm. She wondered if they were a couple. And just before handing the attendant his boarding pass, the stranger looked back at Bobbi, and she looked away.

When Bobbi boarded, she walked past the interesting couple to her seat and put her carry-on in the overhead compartment. She said a prayer for the flight and for her meeting. She had a lot to be thankful for. After five years in business, Bobbi had managed to position her company as one of the leading independent public relations agencies in Washington, DC. And signing a star athlete like Terry Barnes would take her business to the next level.

In Atlanta, Bobbi deplaned and followed the signs to ground transportation. The stranger and his companion were just ahead of her. Who was this guy anyway? Bobbi frowned. Why did she care?

Eyeing the restroom sign ahead to her right, Bobbi took a detour to freshen up for the meeting, and the couple from the plane disappeared down an escalator.

Bobbi washed her hands and stepped over to the full-length mirror. The tailored white suit and black stilettos had been the perfect choice for today. She smoothed down her bangs and applied more pink gloss to her full lips before rubbing them together. With a wink of approval, she said, "Go get 'em tiger."

When she exited the terminal, the stifling humidity caught in her breath and she gasped. Fanning her face, Bobbi stepped off the curb and reached in her purse for tissues to dab at the beads of sweat forming on her forehead. Just then an older man wearing a black suit, with big eyes, walked toward her holding a sign with her name on it.

“I’m Bobbi Fargua,” she said, waving at the gentleman.

“Hello, Miss Farqua. I’m Eugene, your driver,” he said, tipping his white Kangol.

“A pleasure to meet you, Eugene.”

He nodded, grabbing her bag and she followed him to a black Lincoln Town Car with tinted windows and got in.

“Ahhh. That’s more like it,” said Bobbi, thankful for the rush of cold air.

“We should arrive at Fairview Tower in thirty minutes,” said the driver.

“Thank you.”

Bobbi reached in her purse and pulled out a mirror. Thank goodness her make-up hadn’t melted and her hair hadn’t turned frizzy. The humidity in Atlanta could turn straight hair into afro-puffs in a snap. She dusted her face with a little loose powder and nestled into the soft leather seat for the short ride into downtown.

## *Chapter 2*

Eugene exited the interstate and Bobbi sat on the edge of her seat gazing at the familiar shops and the crowds hurrying along the sidewalks. Things sure had changed since she'd left for the military more than ten years ago. Even though she visited often, everything still looked new—like she didn't know the place at all.

"We're here," said Eugene.

He pulled up to the curb and opened the door for Bobbi. Her eyes traveled up the ten-story building which resembled a huge mirror with its smoky glass design. Inside, she admired the novelty stores and chain restaurants as she pulled her rolling bag across the pristine marble floors to join the small group standing at the elevator bank.

When the doors opened, Bobbi stepped inside with the others and asked for the tenth floor. She rode alone for the last two floors then got off at the Penthouse—suite 1000. Glass double doors revealed a contemporary reception area in shades of gray and black. Bobbi took a deep breath and went inside.

"Good morning. May I help you?" said the woman behind the desk with a cute pixie haircut.

"Yes. Good morning. My name is Bobbi Farqua." Bobbi looked at her watch.

"I'm a bit early, but I have a ten-thirty appointment with Mister Kendall."

The receptionist checked the schedule and picked up the phone. “Mister Kendall, your ten-thirty is here.”

“Miss Farqua is here?” he said. “Uhh . . . give me about ten minutes. Thanks, Tish.”

The receptionist turned her attention back to Bobbi. “Please have a seat. Mister Kendall will be with you shortly.”

“Thank you.”

Bobbi picked up the June issue of *Black Enterprise* from the glass-top table and sat down. She crossed her legs and flipped through the pages.

Competing with big public relations firms required Bobbi to bring her A-game to every business deal. Stellar customer service and personal attention to detail had been the key to her fast-track success—and that’s how she would win over Atlanta Condors’ star running back.

“Hi Bobbi. Jim Kendall.” He smiled and extended his hand.

Bobbi stood to greet him. “Yes, Jim. How are you? Finally, we meet.”

Jim chuckled. “I know. It took many conversations to get to this point. But we’re here now. If you’re ready, let’s go back to my office.”

Bobbi grabbed her things and followed Jim out of the reception area through another set of glass doors and down a hallway. They chatted about her flight on the way to his office.

“By the way, thanks again for sending a driver,” said Bobbi.

“No problem. I’m glad it worked out for you. I’ll call Eugene after the meeting so he can take you wherever you want to go while—”

The phone rang, interrupting them as they entered Jim's office. He moved quickly around his desk to answer it and motioned for Bobbi to have a seat.

"Yes, Tish?"

"Terry called and said he'll be up after he finds parking."

"Okay. Send him back when he gets here."

Bobbi admired the mahogany furniture in Jim's office while she waited. When Jim got off the phone, he went to sit on the corner of his desk near Bobbi and they continued talking about her visit. When Terry made it to Jim's office, he knocked once and entered.

"What's up, man?" said Terry, moving toward Jim.

"Hey there, man. Glad you could make it," said Jim, greeting Terry with a handshake and man-hug. "This is Bobbi Farqua, the publicist I've been talking to you about." Then Jim said, "Bobbi, meet Terry 'Sweet Feet' Barnes, star running back for the Atlanta Condors."

Terry extended his hand. "A pleasure to meet you, Miss Farqua."

Bobbi stood, reaching for Terry's hand and smiled. "Please call me Bobbi. The pleasure is all mine, Sweet Feet." She chuckled. "Thanks for taking the time to meet with me."

Terry brought Bobbi's hand to his lips and kissed it. She almost gagged when his wet lips pressed against her skin. This wasn't the professional reception she'd expected, but whatever. Jim cleared his throat.

"Hey, guys," said Jim. "Let's move to the conference room and get started."

Once there, Jim and Terry sat at the table and chatted while Bobbi prepared for her presentation. She opened her laptop and plugged it into a portable projector to display her presentation on the white board. Then she walked to the front of the table opposite her audience and began her pitch.

For the next twenty minutes, Bobbi talked about her agency's capabilities. She talked about new endorsement deals and ideas for expanding the Sweet Feet brand with Nike. When Bobbi mentioned getting Terry an exclusive deal with a popular sports-drink company, Terry and Jim both nodded their approval, eagerly awaiting her next word.

Bobbi walked toward the gentlemen as she concluded the meeting. "So you see, Terry, at My Way Communications, we take charge of every situation. We tell the story—the story doesn't tell us." With her final words, Bobbi sat next to Sweet Feet. "You have any questions for me?"

"I'm impressed," said Terry. "Do you represent any other professional athletes?"

"You mean besides you?" She chuckled. "Just kidding. You would be my first. However," she reached in her bag and pulled out a folder, "here's a list of my clients. They've agreed to talk with you about their experience at My Way."

Terry reached for the file. "Thanks." He looked at Jim.

"Here," said Bobbi, handing Terry a business card. "Take your time and check out my company and my credentials. And when you're ready, give me a call."

Bobbi shut down her equipment while Terry read over her client list and Jim made small talk with her about the meeting.

A few minutes later, Terry stood to excuse himself. But before he left the room, he thanked Bobbi for coming to Atlanta. “I’ll definitely be in touch,” he said, kissing her hand again. “Safe travels.” He winked at her and walked out.

Bobbi held back a frown. Rumor had it that Terry was engaged, so she didn’t appreciate his flirty eyes or his wet lips. She wanted his business—not him.

As Bobbi finished packing her things, Jim watched her every move.

“So, Bobbi,” he said, “I may have some other business to throw your way, if you’re interested. I like your style. From what I just saw here, Terry should be ready to sign on the dotted line today. You convinced me . . . and if I need to convince him, I will.”

“Thanks for the vote of confidence,” she said, zipping her bag. “I’m sure Terry will make the right decision for him. But as for your other clients, give me a call and we can go from there.”

“Sounds good to me.” Jim used the telephone in the conference room to call for the car and escorted Bobbi back to the reception area.

“Thanks for setting up the meeting . . . and for the car,” said Bobbi. “I look forward to working with you.” She shook Jim’s hand. “Enjoy the rest of your day.”



## *Chapter 3*

Bobbi pondered the meeting with Terry. Closing this deal had been her primary focus for weeks. She had expected him to make a decision before she left Jim's office.

When she'd talked with Jim in the weeks leading up to the meeting, she learned that Terry had been through a number of publicists over the years. And this time around, he wanted to be the top priority and not just another client on a list, so they were considering smaller firms.

Nevertheless, Bobbi had to trust that all the work she'd put into signing Terry would pay off. So, she pushed aside her speculating thoughts and called her mother when the driver got off the exit for Buckhead.

"Hello."

"Hey, Ma! What are you doing?"

"Hey there, baby girl. I'm in my office, working. You on your way?"

"Yep. Should be there in fifteen minutes," said Bobbi.

"Okay. See you when you get here. Be safe."

When Bobbi arrived at her mother's house, she put her key in the door and before she could close it, Grace met her in the foyer. They hugged and planted butterfly kisses on each other's cheeks, and then doted over hair, clothes, skin, and make-up—the usual girly stuff—like they hadn't seen one another in years.

They went to the kitchen and Grace poured Bobbi a glass of iced tea. Grace asked about the meeting and Bobbi told her that she felt good about the pitch but hadn't closed the deal just yet. They chatted a while longer about family matters and Grace's plans for the summer before a rumbling in Bobbi's stomach reminded her that she hadn't eaten today. And she knew exactly where she wanted to go—Leonard's Grille on Peachtree Road. So the mother and daughter jumped in Grace's red two-seater convertible Benz and headed to lunch.

At Leonard's Grille, they ordered, and once the server left the table, Grace asked Bobbi if she'd contacted Lance. Bobbi rolled her eyes. She knew her mom wouldn't let this day go by without asking about him.

"No, Ma. I haven't had time to show him around, so I haven't reached out yet."

"He's a very nice, successful young man. He's going to think I lied to his mother about my wonderful, kind-hearted daughter. I wish you would just call the man."

"I will." Bobbi shrugged her shoulders. "When I get a chance."

"Okay, dear. Now, don't lie to your mother. You know I don't play."

Grace's phone rang and Bobbi breathed a sigh of relief. She didn't want to go back and forth with her mom, or talk about this Lance guy. She would get around to meeting him soon. Things were busy at work and Bobbi didn't need any new male friends—and certainly not a friend of her mother's.

Besides, Grace had mentioned that Lance was a single parent, and that made Bobbi uncomfortable. What if he or his child got attached to her? The thought of it made her cringe. Bobbi ate her salmon and scrolled through work emails while Grace took the call.

After lunch, the two were able to get in some retail therapy before Bobbi's flight. They stopped in a designer boutique and then strolled by a couple of shoe stores before Grace dragged Bobbi into a hobby store looking for jewelry beads. She made them matching bracelets while they sat in front of Fairview Tower waiting for Eugene to take Bobbi back to the airport.

The bumper-to-bumper traffic on Interstate 85 South made Bobbi grateful once again that Jim had provided a car. She should be at the airport in thirty minutes—an hour and a half before her flight.

Bobbi kicked off her heels and wiggled her toes, wondering what her man was doing. She chuckled. Tony could never be her man—he loved women too much. But she had to give him props for how well he played the role of convenient lover. Whenever her libido needed attention, he always came through with no questions asked. And after all she'd been through today—she could use a release.

Bobbi's phone rang.

"What's up, Nikki?" she said.

"Hey, B. You know why I'm calling, so give it up. How'd the meeting with Sweet Feet go?"

Bobbi smiled. "You know I did my thing. I'm just waiting for a yes."

"Is he fine in person?" said Nikki.

"Yeah, but dude is super duper weird though . . . almost inappropriate—" Bobbi's phone beeped. "Hey, let me call you back. Got a business call coming in."

Bobbi hung up with Nikki and accepted the incoming call from Jim Kendall.

“Hello, Bobbi Farqua,” she said.

“Bobbi. This is Jim. Are you at the airport?”

“Hey, Jim. Not yet, but we’re getting there.”

“Great. I talked with Terry after you left and he has a few questions for you.”

“Sure. Is he there with you now?” Bobbi said.

“No . . . he left not long after you did this morning.”

“Okay. Well, I’ll have my assistant call your office first thing tomorrow morning to arrange a conference call.”

“Sounds great. Have a safe flight.”

“Thank you. Bye.”

Bobbi pumped her fist in the air. Signing Terry would happen—it had to. She shifted on the soft leather seat and squeezed her thighs together. Something about closing big business deals toyed with her hormones. Maybe the sense of fulfillment in her work caused her body to react this way. Or perhaps it had to do with an adrenaline rush. Whatever the case, the familiar twitch down below demanded action.

After Bobbi checked in for her flight and escaped airport security, she pulled out her phone and called Tony.

“Hey, love,” he answered.

“Hey, you. Can you come over tonight?”

“Uhh . . . yeah.”

“Cool.” Bobbi checked the time. “Eleven-thirty is good. And, oh—” she giggled.

“Don’t wear any underwear. I don’t want anything in my way.”

“You just be ready when I get there.”

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Onboard the plane, Bobbi fastened her seatbelt and closed her eyes. Her lips turned up in a smile. Finally, she could get some sleep.

“Excuse me. Is that seat taken? Miss . . . excuse me,” said the man standing in the aisle. “Is anyone sitting there?”

Bobbi’s eyes popped open. In the aisle next to her, pointing at the window seat stood the mystery man from her morning flight. She had to be dreaming.

Bobbi poked her chest. “You talking to me?”

“Yes. Is that seat taken . . . the window seat?”

Bobbi looked around at the other vacant seats nearby, wondering what seat number he had on his boarding pass. “Uh . . . I don’t know.”

He proceeded to secure his belongings and side stepped past her to the window seat.

Bobbi forced a smile and nodded in his direction. Then she closed her eyes again and pressed her head against the seat—thoughts of Tony slowly fading into the shadow of curiosity with her new travel companion.

Once he settled in, the mystery man pulled out his phone and made a call. Bobbi didn’t want to eavesdrop, but she couldn’t help her self. Based on the tone of his voice, he had to be talking to a woman. And the unmistakable way he said, “I love you” before ending the call, told Bobbi all she needed to know.

While the flight attendant prepared the cabin for takeoff, Bobbi cut her eye at Mr. What's-his-name sitting to her left. Game recognized game. He'd indirectly made a full disclosure about his current status, just in case the two of them became acquainted on the flight.

Bobbi went to the restroom after the pilot announced the altitude and turned off the fasten seatbelt light. When she returned to her seat, the handsome stranger at the window took the opportunity to introduce himself.

"By the way, my name is Savon—Savon Turner." He extended his hand.  
"Weren't you on the flight this morning?"

Checkmate. Bobbi reached across the center seat to shake his hand.

"Hi, Savon, nice to meet you. I'm Bobbi Farqua. And yes, I do remember you from this morning." Savon's hand held hers longer than she'd expected, considering the phone call she'd just heard.

After introductions, an awkward silence filled the space between them. Bobbi was curious, but not desperate. If he didn't say another word the entire flight, neither would she.

"So . . . Bobbi. Are you from DC?" said Savon, interrupting her thought.

"No. I was raised in Atlanta—in Buckhead. But I live in the DC area," she said.

"Small world. What part of Buckhead?" said Savon.

"Peachtree Park."

"Me too—on the north side. My family moved there from New York when I was in high school," he said.

"No way," said Bobbi. "Humph. You don't look familiar."

“You either,” he said.

They talked about their neighborhoods and growing up in the A. When they started name-dropping, they discovered they knew some of the same people.

“Talk about coincidences,” said Bobbi.

“Yeah . . .” Savon gazed at her. “Do you follow pro sports?”

“A little. I usually go to a few games—football and basketball.”

“Hmmm,” he said.

Then Bobbi added, “But I like basketball more, cause the Washington Warriors football team sucks.”

Savon frowned. “I play for the Warriors. I just did a radio interview and an autograph signing at my old high school.”

A brunette flight attendant with red lipstick on her front tooth interrupted their conversation. “Would you like something to drink?” she said.

Both Savon and Bobbi asked for water and the attendant scribbled on a pad and moved on.

“Don’t get me wrong,” Bobbi said. “I definitely consider myself a Warriors fan, but come on—you guys could do much better.” She giggled. “My girlfriend and I say the team should try exorcism to cast out that losing demon. Ha!” Bobbi held her chest to quiet the laughter.

When she realized her humor had offended Savon, she changed the subject to smooth things over. To answer one of his earlier questions, she told him that she was a publicist. They talked about her line of work and about making money in general. When

the flight attendant rolled by with their waters and two bags of honey-roasted peanuts, Bobbi took the opportunity to shift the conversation again.

She asked him about his social life and where he hung out. The exchange between them flowed with little to no effort and, before long the pilot interrupted the cabin with an announcement to prepare for landing.

In the time it took to fly from Atlanta to DC, the chemistry between them grew. But Savon had already told Bobbi that he had a fiancée. So she knew their meeting today would be both the beginning and the end of her curiosity. Although Bobbi didn't want a serious relationship, she never wanted to be the one to help a cheater cheat.

As the plane landed, neither one said a word. In their silence, thoughts flooded Bobbi's mind about meeting the perfect stranger.

The two exited the aircraft and walked down the concourse and out to the parking garage together. Then things became awkward again. Had Savon not been engaged, Bobbi would know what to say to keep him on the hook. But that wasn't the case.

She flipped her hair over her shoulder and reached in her purse for a business card. "If you're ever in the market for a publicist, give me a call," she said, handing him the card.

He examined it and looked at her. "You didn't say you owned a PR agency." He tapped the card against his finger. "Hmmm. I'm impressed. Brains and beauty."

Bobbi looked up at Savon and, when their eyes met, she knew she had to leave. "Well, it's been a long day. My bed is calling me. It was a pleasure meeting you though, and reminiscing about home—"



“Check it out,” he interrupted, “a few of my homeboys are coming to DC to hang out with me this weekend. We’ll be at Club Dream, Friday night. You should come.”

Bobbi tried not to read into his invite. She turned to press the elevator button and then looked back at him. “If I can, me and my girl will stop by for drinks,” Bobbi lied. Thank goodness for the ding of the elevator—she needed to get far away from this man. “Take care, Savon,” said Bobbi before the doors closed.